

FAQs: PHS 398 and PHS 2590 Forms and Instructions

[General Questions](#)

[RTF \(Rich Text Format\)](#)

[PDF \(Portable Document Format\)](#)

[Questions Related to Form Pages](#)

[Questions Related to the PHS 2590](#)

[SBIR/STTR Applications](#)

[Other Helpful Hints](#)

DISCLAIMER: Reference to software packages neither constitutes nor should be inferred to be an endorsement or recommendation of any product, service, or enterprise by the National Institutes of Health, any other agency of the United States Government, or any employee of the United States Government. No warranties are stated or implied.

General Questions

1. **How can I open the files for the PHS 398 and 2590 (Revised 05/01)?**

The PHS 398 and PHS 2590 fillable forms are available as Rich Text Format (RTF) files and Portable Document Files (PDF). See below for specific information related to **RTF** and **PDF**. The text of the PHS 398 Instructions are available in Adobe Acrobat Reader format. Before attempting to read PDF files, you need to have the **free** Adobe Acrobat **Reader** installed ([click here to download](#)), which allows you to view and print .pdf files.

2. **Must I use the "Format" Pages?**


The PHS 398 and PHS 2590 include Form Pages and Format Pages. The format pages are intended to *assist* you in the development of specific sections of the application. Format Pages have been left "unprotected" to allow you to format text, insert graphics, diagrams, or tables. Alternatively, you may create a page similar to the format provided and inclusive of requisite information. TYPE SIZE AND FORMAT SPECIFICATIONS MUST BE FOLLOWED OR THE APPLICATION WILL BE DESIGNATED AS INCOMPLETE AND WILL BE RETURNED TO THE APPLICANT ORGANIZATION WITHOUT PEER REVIEW.

3. **How can I successfully download the PHS 398 on my Mac?**

Mac users may experience problems downloading the files from the FTP links. The FTP links does provide a faster connection for downloading. However, some Macs are experiencing difficulties using the FTP download option with Netscape but not when using Internet Explorer. As an alternative, we offer HTTP links to both the Instructions and Forms files. These may be found at the updated PHS 398 file (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>).

NOTE: Regardless of the link you select, these files are very large and may take a few minutes to download.

4. Is there an easy way to search the PHS 398 and 2590 Instructions?

Yes. Once you open the PDF document, select the “binocular” icon  and enter key words to search the text. This is a quick way to navigate the document(s).

5. If I use the 4/98 version, which instructions do I follow—the 4/98 or the 5/01?

You follow the 4/98 instructions. However, we strongly encourage applicants to use the revised (5/01) version. All applications received on or after January 10, 2002 must use the new forms.

6. Why do I get an old (cached) version of a form or file in my browser, when the Web site says it has been updated?

A browser will often store a "cached" version of files in memory for frequently accessed pages so the computer does not have to retrieve pages each time they are viewed. To force a reload of a page from the Web site (bring the latest version of the file):

1. Hold down the **Shift Key**.
2. Click the **Reload/Refresh Button**

OR (If That Does not Work)

1. Close the browser.
2. Re-open and re-load the page.

You may configure your browser re-load options, as follows:

Netscape 4.7x, click:

1. Edit
2. Preferences
3. Advanced
4. Cache
5. Every time

Internet Explorer 5.x, click:

1. Tools
2. Internet Options
3. General Tab
4. Temporary Internet Files
5. Settings
6. Every visit to the page **OR** Every time you start Internet Explorer (If you experience a slowdown)

These selections will assure you get the most recent versions of the files when browsing.

RTF (Rich Text Format)

7. What is RTF?

Rich Text Format (RTF) is a standardized way to encode various text-formatting properties, such as bold characters and typefaces, as well as document formatting and structures. RTF is supported across a number of platforms. RTF files can be opened in many word processors and other RTF-aware software packages with much of its formatting left intact. In addition, many word processing programs will also allow users to save a document in RTF when you select "Save As..."


8. How can I change the settings in the RTF fields?

Some fields on the RTF Form Pages have been "protected" to minimize significant alterations of the forms. You may select "Unprotect Document" under "Tools" to make necessary modifications. Please be advised that TYPE SIZE AND FORMAT SPECIFICATIONS MUST BE FOLLOWED OR THE APPLICATION WILL BE DESIGNATED AS INCOMPLETE AND WILL BE RETURNED TO THE APPLICANT ORGANIZATION WITHOUT PEER REVIEW. If you encounter problems with the forms or print margins because of printer settings, please use the individual files (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html#forms>) for Forms/Format Pages.

9. How can I type page numbers into RTF forms?

On form pages whose fields have been "Protected," page numbers may be added by "unprotecting" the document (under Tools) and double-clicking in the "footer". Select "Protect Document" to return to the protected field settings.

PDF (Portable Document Format)**10. How can I type in the fields on the PDF Form Pages**

Make sure that the "Hand Tool"  is selected on the tool bar.

11. How can I save the information once it is entered on the PDF form?

There are limitations on the functionality of fillable PDF forms depending on which Adobe Acrobat product you are using.

- ☐ In Adobe Acrobat **Reader**, you can fill in and print the forms but you **cannot save** them. You must re-fill the pdf form every time you open it.
- ☐ Software packages may be available that will allow you to complete, save and print the forms. However, it is essential that the type size and format specifications are met or the application will be returned without review.

12. Do the fillable forms in Adobe allow special formatting?

No. There are limitations on the functionality of fillable PDF forms. Therefore, alternate versions of the form/format pages are provided in Rich Text Format (RTF).

Form Pages**13. On the PHS 398 Table of Contents page, how do I type a range of page numbers?**

The TOC has been reformatted to include two columns to allow such an entry.

14. Do the font sizes that are automatically set on the Form/Format Pages meet the application format style and NIH specifications?

Yes.

Note: Some of the fields on the Form Pages (e.g., e-mail address) have been preset with a smaller font size to enable all characters to be printed.

15. Is there a Continuation Page?

Yes. A Continuation Format Page has been included in both PDF and RTF.

NOTE: Only text can be entered on the PDF-format page. For Graphics and Tables, you should use the RTF Continuation Format Page

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/continuation.rtf>. Alternatively, you may create your own Continuation Page using a blank sheet of paper. Be sure to:

- Include the name of the Principal Investigator at the top, right corner of the page.
- Stay within the 1/2" margin limitations.

16. Is there a specific budget form page to be used for Modular Grant Applications?

Yes. Use the Modular Budget Format Page: Budget Justification Page for Modular Research Grant Applications. Follow the specific instructions in the PHS 398 for preparing grant applications submitted in a modular format.

SBIR/STTR applicants: see additional information under “SBIR/STTR Applications.”

17. Why am I having difficulties typing in the fields on the Biographical Sketch PDF Format Page?

The Biographical Sketch Format Page consists of a sample page followed by an interactive page. You may use the interactive page to fill in the form directly. You may also use the RTF version of the Biographical Sketch Format Page if special formatting is necessary.

NOTE: The Biographical Sketch may be up to four pages for each key personnel.

18. Why do zeros appear on some of the PDF form pages?

Some of the fields have been set to auto-calculate. A zero will appear until real data are entered.

19. Why does the number entered (e.g., 48.7) for “Rate Applied” round up (e.g., 49) on the Checklist Page?

The Checklist Form Page has been updated to allow two decimal places. Be sure to click “**Reload This Page**” once you access the forms since browsers may automatically pull up a cached version of the PHS 398 Instructions. (To get the most recent version of file, hold down the **Shift Key**, then the click the **Reload/Refresh Button** (see related question below for details on cached pages).

PHS 2590

20. Is there a field on the PHS 2590 Form Page 2 (Detailed Budget for Next Budget Period) to enter a subtotal for personnel costs?

Yes. The form has been updated. Be sure to click “**Reload This Page**” once you access the forms since browsers may automatically pull up a cached version of the PHS 2590 Instructions. (To get the most recent version of file, hold down the **Shift Key**, then the click the **Reload/Refresh Button** (see related question below for details on cached pages).

21. On the PHS 2590 Form Page 7, why can't I type my Social Security Number in the field?

The fields on Form Page 7 have been updated. Be sure to click “**Reload This Page**” once you access the forms since browsers may automatically pull up a cached version of the PHS 2590 Instructions. (To get the most recent version of file, hold down the **Shift Key**, then the click the **Reload/Refresh Button** (see related question below for details on cached pages).

SBIR/STTR Applications

22. May I use the new fillable 398 forms instead of the PHS 6246 forms for SBIR or STTR applications due on December 1?

Yes. You may use these instructions and forms; however, NIH will accept Phase I and Phase II SBIR and STTR applications on the PHS 6246-1, 6246-2, 6246-3, and 6246-4 form pages through the December 1 receipt dates. Beginning January 10, 2002, use of the revised PHS 398 instructions and forms are required. The previous versions of the SBIR and STTR forms and instructions will remain available until that time. See NIH Guide Notice of July 10, 2001 <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-01-049.html> for more information.

23. When do I need to use the Modular Budget Format Page?

For Phase I SBIR/STTR budgets of \$100,000 total costs or less, use the Modular Budget Format Page. If the project period is for one year or less, just complete the first box for “Initial Budget Period.” If the Phase I request is for more than one year, complete the appropriate number of additional fields for “year of Support.” Modular budget requests for SBIR/STTR applications are not made in increments of \$25,000. Request the actual amount (e.g., \$97, 245)


24. Is the PHS 398 Checklist used for the SBIR Phase I?

Yes. The Checklist is not included in the “page limitations” specified for Phase I applications, however, it should still be submitted. It is the last page to be numbered in the application.

25. Should I number the pages that are excluded from page limitations?

Yes. All pages with the exception of the Personal Data Page should be numbered even though some of the pages will be excluded from specified page limitations. Do not use suffixes such as “3a” or “3b.”

Other Helpful Hints

- If you previously downloaded the forms and instructions to your desktop, NIH strongly recommends that you **reload** the documents and forms to ensure that you have the most current version. Notable changes are provided at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html#updates>.
- **Comments** (identified by a notepad icon ) have been added to some of the PDF form pages to provide helpful hints.
- Applicants are encouraged to use the RTF files as they allow for text formatting. Applicants using PDF versions of the PHS 398 and 2590 should note that **text** (but not graphics or tables!) may be **copied/pasted** from another document (e.g., Microsoft Word) into the fillable space on the PHS 398 or 2590 PDF Forms.
- **Black dots, squares and/or cross-marks** in the upper, left and bottom corners of the form pages were added in anticipation that NIH will, in the future, be scanning the applications.
- Applicants using **human subjects** in their research are encouraged to use the table in the PHS 398 instructions entitled, “Guidance for Preparing the Human Subjects Research Section.”